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ABSTRACT

Public Law 480, whose original intent was to sell surplus foodstuffs to famine-stricken nations, evolved into a program of obtaining foreign language materials for libraries with the large quantities of soft currencies obtained through the food sales. The acquisition effort developed ambitious goals for systematic improvement of the quality of area and language studies in American universities. Major area collections have evolved in university libraries, largely as a result of this federal support. However, libraries have at the same time become less reliant upon other means of support for development of collections. The high level of support provided by Public Law 480 is now threatened. Participating libraries will probably be forced to contribute to the full cost of materials orders, and university participation in the customary blanket orders is likely to shrink. Similarly, the number of items available through the program may decrease, and the format may be less acceptable due to a microfilming trend. These developments suggest that the future of the Public Law 480 libraries and the area studies programs they support is uncertain. (MSE)

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Public Law 480: Declining prospects for the continued Support of Area Studies

By

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Public Law 480 Libraries: Declining Prospects for the Continued Support of Area Studies Through Federal Support For Foreign Language Materials

One poorly understood area of library support that is provided by the Federal Government is that of the PL 480 library materials acquisitions program. Designed to serve two needs, the use of "soft" currencies acquired by the United States Government and to provide support for acquisitions, PL 480 deserves more attention that it has received to date.

Accordingly, this paper shall have three major sections. First, the purpose of the PL 480 program shall be examined. This section will give careful consideration of the place of PL 480 within the mainstream of the United States' interaction with other nations. The second section shall deal with the state of PL 480 libraries in the mid-seventies. While it can be argued very cogently that the early 1980's concern for Federal support of library programs was just as common in the mid-1970's, in many ways, the PL 480 program reached its high point during this period, if one chooses to not be an optimist about future prospects. The third part of this paper shall consider the effect of the emerging backlash against the Federal support of such support programs as the subsidy of foreign language publications acquisitions.

PL 480: The Food For Peace Program

Public Law 480 is not primarily a program which was created to provide a subsidy to library acquisition programs in foriegn languages. The program was initially empowered to sell surplus foodstuffs to famine stricken nations. The requirement that the food would be sold, not given away,

would lead to the program's becoming the major support for libraries, however. The problem was not that the foodstuffs were to be sold so much as the fact that the program was predicated upon the idea that the payment would be acceptable even if it were to come in the so-called "soft" currencies.

Soft currencies are those forms of exchange that are not sought on the international money markets. The lack of demand for the products and services that a small nation can provide result in the fact that no one in particular needs the currency from that nation. It is precisely these poor nations without a substantial volume of goods that can be sold that often find themselves in dire need of emergency foods. So, in accepting large amounts of these soft currencies, the United States Government found itself in the possession of large amount of local currencies that no one else wanted or needed.

One response of the United States Government was to make additions onto various and sundry structures that the Government had need of. As a result of this tactic, the Embassy of the United States in New Dehli grew continuously to become a veritible self-contained city. There are obvious problems with the infinite expansion of Embassy facilities, especially in nations where there is dire and continuing poverty. So another method of disposing of the funds was needed. It was soon found.

In the normal course of intelligence gathering, nations are wont to need vast amounts of information on every nation. This information is often obtainable from the open press and publications of those nations. So, nations have always had an interest in the printed matter that is generated in other nations. From here, it is only a very short step to making these acquisitions for the purpose of creating a pool of better educated young scholars.

And so it was that the PL 480 program, originally designed to provide a method of disposing food surplus in return for political support in the Third World, became a means of supporting the acquisition of foreign language materials for many major United States universities.[1]

PL 480 in the Seventies: Development of the Programatic Support for Acquisitions and the Status of Collections.

The acquisition of foreign language materials under the auspices of the PL 580 Program is quite new. The process of acquisition only began in 1962. However, the program had as its goals quite an ambitious and systematic improvement of the quality of area studies and language studies that American universities were able to supply. This ability is here seen simply in terms of physical facilities and assets. However, by implication, it was hoped that the basic increments to foreign language collections would be reflected in the programs that the various universities built around these very special collections.

It is this light that the landmark study of the PL 480 libraries and collections is to be understood. This study, undertaken by the Middle East Library Acquisitions Committee of the Association of Research Libraries, does make such a set of assumptions the basis for examining the effects of the PL 480 program:

- PL 480 Arabic materials constitute a resource to be utilized in the national interest.
- No institution has an innate right to receive PL 480 materials which are provided at the

public expense.

- After 12 years of PL 480, all receipients should have developed flourishing programs in Arabic studies and library procedures to process Arabic materials effectively. It should be noted that presumption of an active Arabic program and library capacity was one factor in the original allocation of shares in the PL 480 Program.

- The justification for receiving PL 480 shares is based primarily, if not solely, on the quantitative use of those materials in terms of numbers of students and faculty.

- The relative wealth of an institution or the size of its non-PL 480 collection is not a consideration in the allocation of program shares.

- The intent of the program is to foster a realistic understanding of the contemporary Arab world... Therefore, institutions engaged in a wide range of disciplines bearing on the Middle Eastern problems can make better use of PL 480 materials than those engaged primarily in medievel Oriental Studies. 2/

From even a cursory consideration of these criteria for the role of the PL 480 libraries in the universities that are the host to those collections, it is clear that the vision that brought the collections into being was a comprehensive vision. The role of these unique collections was to enable the universities that participated, as well as those libraries that did not have physical control of the collections, to develop the basis for a better range of modern Middle Eastern studies (and it should by no means be understood by this that the PL 480 collections contain only materials from the Middle East; indeed, the collections include the entire Third World and enrich every Area Studies program).

Beyond the role that was anticipated for these collections in the selected university libraries that would be the home

for these collections, it was hoped that the existence of these collections would benefit the entire national network of both public and academic libraries. This was to be accomplished by the creation of a standard reference tool modeled on the National Union Catalog. This tool is in fact a union catalog of the materials provided by the PL 480 program, each with its standard catalog card. This product is called the Accessions List. Each geographic region that is served by PL 480 has its own access tool. 3/

In measuring the success of the PL 480 program, there are several methods available. The most basic method is that of counting the number of volumes. Table One, below does just that: it enumerates the major collections that are involved in the PL 480 program.

TABLE ONE: PL 480 ARABIC COLLECTIONS 4/

Alphabetical Order		Rank Order	
Arizona	10,932[a]	1. Princeton	44,303[e]
Binghamton	15,000	2. Harvard	40,500[d]
Boston College	14,390[b]	3. Michigan	38,300
California-Berkeley	15,000 apx.	4. Hoover Institution	30,000
UCLA	25,000 apx.	5. Columbia	28,550
Chicago	15,000 apx.	6. Utah	27,000
Columbia	28,550	7. NYPL	25,000
Cornell	3,625	8. UCLA	25,000
Hartford[c]		9. Texas	22,362
Harvard	40,500[d]	10. Virginia	18,000
Hoover Institution	30,000	11. Indiana	16,500
Illinois	6,000	12. Binghamton	15,000
Indiana	16,500 apx.	13. Chicago	15,000
Kentucky	13,500 apx.	14. California-Berkeley	15,000
Michigan	38,300	15. Boston College	14,390
NYPL	25,000	16. Kentucky	13,500
NYU	10,500	17. Portland	12,953[e]
Portland	12,953[e]	18. Yale	11,000
Princeton	44,703[e]	19. Arizona	10,932
USC	10,000 apx.	20. NYU	10,500
Texas	22,362	21. USC	10,000
Utah	27,000 apx.	22. Illinois	6,000
Virginia	18,000	23. Cornell	3,625
Yale	11,000 apx.	24. Hartford[c]	

[a]Arizona State's P.L. 480 share was transferred to Arizona in 1970.
[b]All monograph volumes are stored in the New England Deposit Library.
[c]Hartford does not keep separate statistics.
[d]The Harvard count is 32,500 different titles.
[e]Includes serial volumes.

More impressive that these simple statistics is the plain fact that the major part of the acquisitions that have entered these collections since 1962 (the start of the PL 480 acquisitions) have been acquisitions that were made through PL 480. Now while it is certainly true that the PL 480 acquisitions tend to displace acquisitions that would otherwise have been made by the library itself 5/, it is also true that the volume of acquisitions that has been possible is greatly increased as a result of PL 480 funding.

The degree to which the growth and development of these collections has been made possible by PL 480 is made even more clear when one considers the evidence presented by the published catalogs of the Atiya Collection at the University of Utah. 6/ The 11,510 entries that are cataloged are essentially the set of acquisitions that were made possible by PL 480.7/

To a very considerable degree, all major collections of materials in Arabic in the United States have become dependent upon PL 480 for their acquisitions. This was never seen as a problem in the past. Indeed, it can be realistically assumed that such a dependence upon the continuation of federal funding through PL 480 for these collections' development can never have been regarded as a bad thing. As with most government programs, it was never considered that the PL 480 acquisitions would be conducted within a very different fiscal environment.

But this is precisely what has come to pass. While the original purpose of PL 480 was to make it possible for the regional university libraries to acquire greatly improved sets of material at the expense of the federal government, this has inevitably led to a reduced local committment and ability to take up this cost. For the same set of circumstances that have led to the inability of the federal government to maintain its support at the old levels of funding affect the local governments that are the principle source of funds today.

And so, it is by way of conclusion for a review of the state of PL 480 libraries in 1975 and by way of introduction to the dilemma of the future that Table Two is attached below. For to the same degree that the PL 480 program once subsidized these collections, it is this degree of support that is threatened today.

TABLE TWO. LIBRARY RELIANCE ON PL 480 8/

Key: Column A--P.L. 480 provides what percentage of Arabic acquisitions?
Column B-- What percentage of P.L. 480 receipts are retained?
Column C--P.L. 480 constitutes what percentage of Arabic books cataloged?
Column D--Size of P.L. 480 cataloging arrearage?

	A	B	C	D
Arizona	99	90	98	3,810
Binghamton	90	95	90[f]	1,500
Boston College	95	95-98	95	1,000
California-Berkeley	60	80	80-90[f]	7-8,000
UCLA	60	75	60	400
Chicago	75[a]	90	80[f]	5,000
Columbia	80-85	75-80	85-90[f]	325
Cornell	90	95	90	2,390
Hartford	95	99[b]	95	191
Harvard	56	95	79[f]	3,416[h]
Hoover	NA	90	100	1,000
Illinois	98	95	100	3,000
Indiana	80-85	95	85	875
Kentucky	99	100	99	0[i]
Michigan	80	81	75	950
NYPL	75	NA	75	5,000
NYU	100	"none"	81.4	3,000
Portland	98	99	99	1,900
Princeton[g]	50 apx.	98[c]	33-50	150
USC	99.9	99[d]	99.9	5-6,000
Texas	80	95	80	746[j]
Utah	60[e]	90	60[e]	550
Virginia	99.9	99.9	100	5,000
Yale	95	80-85	95	4,700 apx.

[a]Not typical; non-P.L. 480 input has been below normal for past two years.
[b]Portland and Hartford originally shared a set. Hartford now receives only selected publications.
[c]Not reported, but known from personal contact.
[d]Expect to retain about 30 percent in the future.
[e]Normally P.L. 480 receipts form a larger percentage.
[f]Higher than typical.
[g]Library staff absent; figures compiled by the Director.
[h]Reduces to 200 by March 15, 1974.
[i]All receipts are given only partial cataloging.
[j]"746 received since Sept. 1972."

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PL 480: Its Role and Possibilities in the 1980's

One would like to be very optimist about the possibilities of the PL 480 program in the decade of the 1980's. The role of PL 480 in strengthening Area Studies in the United States' university libraries is above any question. The strong support of the collection development of foreign language materials has been for two decades a very important asset for the development of strong programs in Area Studies.

As much as this is true, it cannot be said that the future is hopeful. 9/ Beyond the basic anti-intellectual bais of the Reagan administration lies the emerging problem associated with the PL 480 program itself. The program was not established to create library collections and to support their develop. That aspect of the PL 480 program was a side effect, a sort of fallout, of the Food for Peace Program. And it is that program's problems that spell the immediate problem for the acquisitions program.

There have been two results in the early stages of the erosion of funding available under this SFC or Special Foreign Currency program. 10/ The first result is the change in the level of support that is to be provided by the federal government. One instance of this change is that of the acquisitions from Egypt in Arabic language. There, the shortfall in available foreign currency from PL 480 is to result in a change from the nominal fee charged to individual universities of $500, to a charge back of the full acquisition and admsnistrative support costs of some $17,800 per year. 11/ Clearly, the change in this one country-acquisition program is ominous.

The second change in PL 480 acquisitions, again a response to increasing costs is the introduction of a microfilming program. Such a program is already in place in Indonesia and will soon be in operation in India. 12/ Such a response is typical of the attempts to maintain the PL 480 program's coverage of regions with a diminishing resource base.

Conclusion

It seems clear that the PL 480 Program has been a very important one for the development of United States university Area Study programs. It is critical that the support be maintained. However, with the falling funds that are available to the program, participating libraries will be forced to contribute the full costs of the acquisition programs. Such blanket-order like acqusitions might not be acceptable to some participating institutions if the full costs are charged back to them. It seems possible that the number of participating universities might shrink.

Similiarly, it seems quite possible that the number of items available through PL 480 might fall and that the format of such items as are delivered may be less acceptable to users.

With such an uncertain prognosis, the future of the PL 480 libraries, and indeed of the Area Studies programs that they support is uncertain.

Notes

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2/ Partington, David H. "Arabic Library Collections: A Study of the PL 480 Program by the Committee on the Middle East", Middle East Studies Association Bulletin,Vol. IX, No. 1, February 1, 1975. page 12.

3/ Library of Congress, Accession List: Middle East. Cairo, United Arab Republic: Library of Congress. Annual.

4/ Partington, op.cit., page 15.

5/ Conversation with Donna Straley, University of Arizona Oriental Languages cataloger.

6/ University of Utah Library. Catalogue of the Collection of the Aziz S. Atiya Library. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1968.

7/ Partington, op.cit., page 16.

8/ Ibid., pages 18-19.

9/ For the PL 480 Program see: Library of Congress, "NPAC and SFC Programs", LC Information Bulletin. July 28, 1978. To compare the problems with those of British acqusitions, see: Bloomfield, B.C. "Notes on Library Provision for Oriental and Asian Studies in Great Britian", Journal of Librarianship. April 1976. pages 111-121. Also see Magnus, J.V. Third World Acquisitions", LC Information Bulletin. March 18, 1977.

10/ Library of Congress (July 28), op.cit., page 442.

11/ Ibid., page 443.

12/ Ibid., page 443.